

Crime and Safety Study Session: Answers to Preliminary Study Session Questions

What can be done to control speeding (or calm traffic) in this community?

The City investigates speeding concerns, performs traffic studies to determine the magnitude of a speeding problem. Based on the results, the City either installs traffic control features or requests speed enforcement from the Police Department. Education and enforcement is typically the first step for traffic control. The City has used parking, lane lines, traffic markers, speed limit signs, warning signs, traffic markers, and rumble strips to control speeding.

Over the past four years, the City has performed 25 of speed studies (covering most areas of the Highlands) based upon citizen requests. A speed study is a collection of the number, time and speed of passing vehicles taken over a period (of usually 168 consecutive hours). The City of Renton does this by a machine that can sense the time required for passage of vehicles across a known distance. The data generated by speed studies is very voluminous, which involves collecting data in two directions over 168 hours for a total of 5,040 data points. At the present time, there are eight requests waiting to be fulfilled city-wide, including two requests for the Highlands. The Highlands studies are listed as the 4th and 8th study on the list for this year.

Speed studies require about eight working hours of staff time. Since speed studies require at least two sensors be installed in each lane to be analyzed, they expose field crews to greater risk of oncoming traffic than any other kind of study. Only the most well trained crews are allowed to install speed sensors and sometimes speed studies must be delayed due to a lack of personnel. The actual data collection takes an average of two weeks. Since staff is simultaneously working on other projects, the actual response time is about two months.

Are speed bumps a viable option?

The City of Renton does not at this time have a policy allowing installation of speed bumps on public streets. In 2002, a staff design team reviewed traffic calming measures and issued a report. City policy on traffic calming favors measures that are passive, temporary and removable- such as speed trailers, reader boards, police visibility, additional signage, or rumble strips. Measures such as speed bumps, roundabouts, medians, street closures, and diverters were rejected by the team.

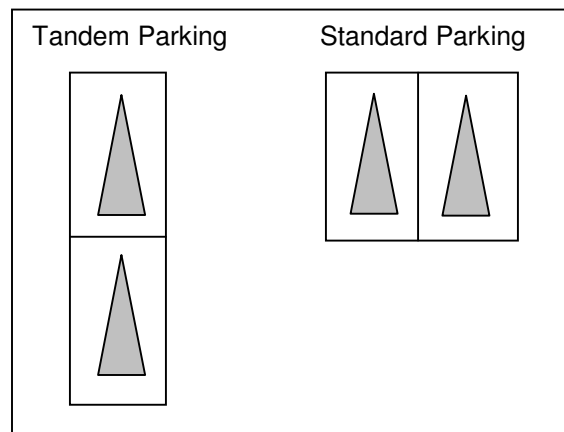
Which laws and codes address parking on public property, private residential property, and private commercial property?

The City has adopted common parking regulations for the parking of vehicles on public property, including public rights of way. This allows the City to establish time limits on parking, establish a parking permit system for some residential neighborhoods, and restrict overnight or long term parking of commercial

vehicles. Some of these regulations are only applicable to the downtown area. In an area, such as the Highlands, which does not have posted parking restrictions, licensed private vehicles can be parked nearly anywhere. Naturally, people still have to follow rules of the road and cannot block driveways, mailboxes, fire hydrants, and other laws set by the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).

Development regulations in the City zoning code require the provision of parking spaces for new development, depending upon the land use. Existing development does not have to conform to these standards. Commercial standards vary widely dependent upon the type of use that is proposed. For example, in the Highlands, restaurants must provide one space per 100 square feet of floor area, but day care centers are required to provide one space per employee and two loading spaces for every 25 client. After private commercial parking is established, parking rules and enforcement are left to the property owner. Typically, this means vehicles that are not supposed to be there or are improperly parked get towed at the owner's expense.

Residential parking development standards also vary depending upon the type of use. Attached residences such as apartments and town homes must provide a minimum on 1.75 spaces per living unit, and more if "tandem" parking is allowed. Residences such as single-family homes must provide two spaces per living unit, with a maximum of four vehicles allowed to park in the lot unless within a covered building. There are



currently no regulations that prevent people from parking in their front yard because, given the definition of yard, that would prevent people from parking in their driveways as well. Parking standards are only applied to new development. Much of the housing development in the World War II era does not have any provision for off-street parking at all. Furthermore, even with new development there is no requirement that owners use their required parking for parking. Many people use their required off-street parking (i.e. their garage) for storage of just about everything except their vehicle. Cars then get parked in a driveway or on the street. If there is legal public parking in front of the home there is no limit on the number of cars a household can park on the street.

How is the community patrolled now?

The City is broken up into 10 patrol districts, five are in the north part of the City and five are in the south portion of the City. Within the Task Force study area, the Highlands is served by two patrol districts, 23 and 24. There is one officer on

patrol in each district, 24 hours a day. In addition to the patrol officer, there are non-uniformed officers conducting special operations to address issues that require non-uniformed investigation.

From where is the community patrolled?

All patrol operations are conducted from the Renton City hall. Some patrol districts have an office space in the area served- a place for making follow up phone calls, filling out essential paperwork, and filing reports. This keeps officers on patrol in the community without having to return to City hall to conduct business. In the Highlands, patrol officers have business space at Fire Station 12, which is located at NE 12th and Jefferson . Additionally, the City is in the process of hiring transfer officers, whose job it will be to pick up those taken into custody and bring them into jail. This is another measure that will help keep patrol officers in the community.

How does the level of service provided to the Highlands compare to other neighborhoods?

Typically, budget resources are fairly evenly split between the different patrol districts. However, since 2006, the Renton City Council has authorized an additional expenditure of \$50,000 to fund additional police coverage in the Highlands. This program authorized additional money and expenditure for the Highlands based on concerns expressed about police presence in 2006. In the last two years, that money has been spent on additional patrol resources and officer overtime in the Highlands.

Is it possible to get emphasis patrols for: speeding, graffiti/vandalism, fireworks, drugs, gangs?

- City traffic enforcement is conducted city wide by two cars and four motorcycles. The traffic enforcement team responds to complaints and concerns about traffic by patrolling neighborhoods that have been having problems. Citizens with traffic control concerns should contact Sgt. Clark Wilcox at 425-430-7561 or cwilcox@ci.renton.wa.us.
- Graffiti and vandalism are difficult problems to solve with an emphasis patrol. A dedicated gang officer tracks graffiti and gang activity in Renton, and contributes to a national database that monitors this type of activity. Graffiti is most effectively dealt with when businesses and property owners remove it immediately. Code enforcement has been actively working in the community on this issue. Graffiti in progress should be reported to 911, but other reports of graffiti should be made to 425-430-7373 or codecompliance@ci.renton.wa.us.
- Emphasis patrols are added each year to enforce the fireworks ban. Officers are prevented from asking for time off and asked to work overtime during the summer fireworks season in order to staff the patrols. However, the volume of complaints is very high.
- Many drug issues are handled by special operations and non-uniformed personnel.

Are there programs in place that could help increase the feeling of safety and security in the neighborhood?

The Police Department offers a variety of classes, trainings, and programs to help increase the feeling of safety and security of neighborhood businesses and residents. Some of the programs include: Citizen and Advanced Citizen Academy classes, Bank Watch, Block Watch, Business Security Surveys, Business Watch, Business Watch Bulletins, Burglary Prevention, Child Safety/ Stranger Danger, Commercial Robbery Prevention, Crime Resistant Multi-housing program, False Alarm Reduction, Internal Theft, National Night Out, Office Safety, Park Safety, Personal Safety Classes, Residential Security Surveys, Senior Alert Publication, Shoplift Prevention, Technical Advisory Committee, Vacation House Watch, WEB Page and Youth at Risk. To find out more about one of these programs, contact Cyndie Parks or Terri Vickers at 425-430-7521 (7520) or cparks@ci.renton.wa.us. or tvickers@ci.renton.wa.us.

Are there ways that citizens could volunteer to help keep the neighborhood safe?

There are many ways that citizens could volunteer to help keep the neighborhood safe. Volunteers are used in several of the programs listed above to help facilitate community safety. Other communities around the country have utilized citizen volunteers to assist Police Departments in a number of ways. Renton's Police Department is willing to work with neighborhood groups who want to establish new neighborhood specific programs.

How can citizens best interact with the Police department to get their needs met?

The most effective way for citizens to interact with department is to learn more about how the department functions. One way to do this is to participate in the Citizens Academy program.

What budget increases might be necessary to provide more police support in the Highlands?

A budget increase of \$50,000 a year has already been approved for the Highlands emphasis program. That provides 64 hours per month of additional staff time to provide additional service in the Highlands.